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ABSTRACT

In order to determine how much censorship was taking place in Illinois social studies classes, 200 principals were asked to respond to a questionnaire regarding censorship of teaching methods and social studies textbooks. The principals were asked to respond to the following topics concerning the degree of censorship encountered for each item: United Nations/ internationalism/global education, communism, controversial issues, prominent controversial figures, mistakes of the United States in the past, the Holocaust, ethnic studies, pagan cultures/life styles, omission of black's achievement, omission of women's achievement, and the omission of other minorities' achievement. It was found that the inclusion of material on communism and controversial issues received the most censorship for social studies texts. In many parts of the country, teaching about the United Nations and global education is under attack, but it did not prove to be so in Illinois. In responding to amounts of censorship of teaching methods, it would appear that discussion of controversial issues in social studies was censored most frequently with 55 principals reporting it occurred occassionally and eight frequently, although it occurred more often in the larger school systems with the highest of 80% in schools of 600-700. It appears that social studies teachers are relatively free to teach as they see fit without too much interference from outside pressure groups. Attached to this paper are three data tables on the censorhip of teaching methods, censorship of social studies textbooks, and origin of censorship and the censorship survey form. (Author/RM)

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CENSORSHIP IN SOCIAL STUDIES

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Censorship of textbooks, library books, and teaching methods is increasing at an alarming rate in the United States. It is estimated that one in every five schools districts will be exposed to some censorship by a person or group who find books that are offensive to them personally. (Katz, 1981). Many schools are adopting policies that offer guidelines to would-be censors and are offering alternate reading assignments to students whose parents object to certain books.

Social studies has not been allowed to remain above the fray of textbook censorship. A successful attack has been made on MACOS (Man: A Course of Study.) Among other allegations, Norma Gabler, one of the leading censorship proponents, asserted that the course involves wife swapping and survival games. However

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anthropoligists at the University of Vermont refuted Mrs. Gabler by explaining that the wife-swapping only represented the importance of women in Eskimo society and that it explains animal adaptation, life cycle, myths, etc. However, the Gablers have been quite successful in getting MACOS removed from many schools in the States and also in Australia.

Other attempts at censorship of social studies textbooks have occurred in Portland, Oregon, where the censors wanted no criticism of the founders of our republic; Fairfax County, Virginia, over a controversial speaker; Philadelphia for teaching the Holocaust, etc. The censors want to make sure the social studies materials do not defame historical personalities and they want to eliminate ethnic studies and pagan cultures/life styles. (Jenkinson, 1979, p. 83.)

In order to determine how much censorship was taking place in Illinois social studies classes, 200 principals were asked to respond to a questionnaire regarding censorship of teaching methods and social studies textbooks. The more pertinent findings are discussed below.

The principals were asked to respond to certain topics usually covered in social studies textbooks concerning the degree of censorship encountered for each item. The items included United Nations/internationalism/global education; communism; controversial issues; prominent controversial figures; mistakes of the United States in the past; the Holocaust, ethnic studies; pagan cultures/life styles; omission of black's achievement; omission of women's achievement and omission of other minorities' achievement. The reporting scale consisted of Does Not Apply, Never, Occasionally, Frequently and Very Frequently. Responses also were computed by size of the school enrollment.

For frequently recorded censorship, communism, UN/global education and controversial issues all received a rating of 9% by the respondents. However, the rating was much higher (20%) in schools with 500-700 enrolled. Censor-

ship had been exerted occasionally on controversial issues (31%), Communism (24%) with omission of accomplishments of women and controversial figures both at 18%. In 82% of the schools, no censorship ever had been attempted on UN/global education and past mistakes of the United States; 81% had no censorship on the Holocaust and 80% had none for ethnic studies.

When the items in the frequently and occasionally columns are combined, it was found that the inclusion of material on communism and controversial issues received the most censorship for social studies texts. In many parts of the country, teaching about the United Nations and global education is under attack, but it did not prove to be so in Illinois.

Teaching about pagan cultures/life styles had been censored in 13 (14%) of the schools occasionally; in 4 schools frequently and in one school very frequently. The omission of the achievement of blacks had been censored in 12 schools occasionally, in two frequently and very frequently, and about the same number in all categories for the omission of the achievements of other minorities.

In responding to amounts of censorship of teaching methods, it would appear that discussion of controversial issues in social studies was censored most frequently with 55 principals reporting it occurred occasionally and eight frequently, although it occurred more often in the larger school systems with the highest of 80% in schools of 600-700. The discovery method of teaching received little censorship and was never censored in 73 of the schools. It was censored in 12 schools occasionally and frequently in 9. Controversial outside speakers came under fire in 51 schools occasionally and frequently in 7, although the number was double that for schools having under 250 students.

From the results determined from this survey, it appears that social studies teachers are relatively free to teach as they see fit without too much interference from outside pressure groups. The study also shows that where censorship does exist, it was coming mainly from the local community. The greatest amount came from individual parents (73%) followed by religious groups (52%) and local organized groups (40%). Well-known outside groups had never been heard from in the large majority of the schools. And while secular humanism is the battle cry of some of the censoring groups, only 4 principals responded that such a charge had been made against their school and 91 reported that no such criticism had occurred.

REFERENCES

1. Southern Illinoisan, August 23, 1981, p. 29.

2. Jenkinson, Edward B., Censors in the Classroom, Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale and Edwardsville, 1979.

TABLE I

Censorship of Teaching Methods

Method	Never %	Occassionally %	Frequently %	Very Frequently %
Discussion of Controversial Issues	33.7	58.0	8.4	0
Role Playing	67.3	15.8	4.2	1.1
Discovery/Inquiry	76.8	12.6	9.5	0
Open-ended Questions	71.6	17.9	8.4	2.1
Controversial Speakers	33.7	53.7	7.4	0
Controversial Films	29.5	58.9	9.5	0

TABLE II

Censorship of Social Studies Textbooks

Subject	Never %	Occassionally %	Frequently %	Very Frequently %
UN/Global Education	82.1	7.4	7.4	2.1
Communism	66.3	24.2	8.4	1.1
Controversial Issues	59.0	31.6	8.4	1.1
Controversial Figures	73.7	17.9	8.4	0
Past Mistakes of U.S.	82.1	11.6	5.3	0
Holocaust	81.1	13.7	4.2	0
Ethnic Studies	80.0	11.6	4.2	0
Pagan Cultures	73.7	13.7	4.2	1.1
Omission of Black's Achievement	72.3	17.0	2.1	2.1
Omission of Women's Achievement	73.4	18.1	2.1	1.1
Omission of Other Minorities' Achievement	75.3	15.1	3.2	1.1

TABLE III

Origin of Censorship

Originators	Never %	Occassionally %	Frequently %	Very Frequently%
Religious Group	41.1	43.2	7.4	2.1
Educational Research Analysts	81.0	9.6	2.1	0
Eagle Forum	72.3	12.8	2.1	0
N.O.W.	77.7	9.6	2.1	0
John Birch Society	69.1	17.0	1.1	1.1
Individual Parent	23.4	59.0	12.8	1.1
Local Organized Group	53.2	35.1	5.3	0

Censorship Survey

In this questionnaire are listed a number of areas in which censorship has occurred. Please read each item and record on the separate answer sheet the degree to which you think censorship attempts have been made in your school in the different areas according to the following descriptions:

1. Does not apply/subject is not taught
2. Never
3. Occasionally
4. Frequently
5. Very Frequently

Teaching Methods

1. Discussion of controversial issues
2. Role playing (psycho-drama)
3. Discovery or inquiry method
4. Open-ended questions
5. Controversial outside speakers
6. Controversial films or TV programs

English Textbooks

7. Obscenity/profanity/street language
8. Pornography
9. Study of black authors
10. No black authors included
11. Rejection of ideas of parent/country/God
12. Supernatural/occult
13. Racist statements
14. "Harsh" realities of life

15. Violence
16. Sex role stereotyping
17. Inappropriate illustrations
18. Reputation of author
19. Would encourage inappropriate behavior on the part of students
20. Would lower moral values of students

Social Studies Textbooks

21. United Nations, internationalism, global education
22. Communism
23. Controversial issues
24. Prominent controversial figures
25. Mistakes of United States in the past
26. Holocaust
27. Ethnic studies
28. Pagan cultures and life styles
29. Omission of achievement of blacks
30. Omission of achievement of women
31. Omission of achievement of other minorities

Science/Health Textbooks

32. Sex education
33. Use of contraceptives
34. Abortion
35. Human reproduction
36. Drug education
37. Values clarification
38. Evolution
39. Death education

40. DNA/genetics

41. Creationism

Library Books

42. Controversial authors

43. Obscenity/profanity/street language

44. Pornography

45. Encourages lowering of moral standards of the students

46. Supernatural/occult

47. Violence

48. Racist/sexist

49. Reputation of authors

50. Specific magazines

51. Specific films

52. Specific dictionaires

Origin of Censorship

53. A religious group

54. Educational Research Analysts

55. Eagle Forum

56. National Organization for Women

57. John Birch Society

58. Individual parent

59. Local organized group of parents

50. Censorship attempts were successful

Demographic Data

61. The enrollment of my school building is

1. under 250
2. 250-500
3. 501-600
4. 601-700
5. over 700

62. Selection of textbooks in my school is made by

1. Individual teachers
2. Committees of teachers
3. Committees of teachers and parents
4. Administrators

63. Selection of library books in my school is made by

1. Librarian
2. Teachers
3. Committees of teachers and parents
4. Administrators
5. Librarian and teachers

64. Has your school system been accused of teaching secular humanism?

1. Yes
2. No

Please respond to the appropriate percentage of racial enrollment according to the scale below:

1. 5-25%
2. 26-50%
3. 51-75%
4. 76-95%

65. White

66. Black

67. Hispanic

68. Oriental